

## Chapter 21

I Accept...

“What?” an Alpha asks just as Sebastian questions.

“Are you sure?”

I nod my head. “More sure than anything in my life”

The fear that had encased my heart earlier doubles as the truth hits me. I felt panic encasing my bones at what this meant.

“So, we were right, this is a targeted attack and it seems whoever is killing is going after the wolves that were freed from captivity.” Ren says, rubbing her hands against her dress.

“Meaning Mayra’s attack wasn’t a coincidence. Whoever it is knew who he or she was going after.”

Darren adds through clenched teeth.

I start shaking my head at the thought. I wanted this not to be true but the proof was staring at me directly in the face. I counted about thirty

different photos. At this point it would be stupid to continue lying to myself that the attacks weren't connected at all.

I watch as Ren picks up the photos. She looks at them, probably with more focus this time.

"I don't know why I didn't see it before. I recognize some of them from that day." she says slowly.

Unable to keep standing, I take a seat on the couch and bury my head in my hands. Just when I thought things were falling in place, they fall apart. When am I going to catch a fucking break?

"But it doesn't make any sense. Why would someone be going after them after everything they've already been through?" Ren asks echoing my exact thoughts.

It was a cluster fuck. Someone wanted us dead for some unknown reason.

"The only explanation is revenge. Someone wants them to pay. It's in the manner that he or she kills. They make their victims suffer and then let them die a slow and painful death." An Alpha I've never seen before replies.

I shiver at his words. Remembering how the beast toyed with me that night. It enjoyed the chase and most importantly it enjoyed seeing me scared out of my mind.

“But that would mean that it is someone who knows them, someone who was there during their time in captivity.” Darren adds.

“But that’s impossible,” I reason. “All those who worked there were humans and we’ve already established that whoever this is not human.”

It was all confusing. Already I was feeling drained and my mind was hurting from having to think so much. There were so many gaps to be filled. So many loopholes that didn’t make any sense.

“She’s right...so now we’re back to square one.” Ren grumbles rubbing her temples. I guess I wasn’t the only one feeling the stress of this day.

It was like we were going round in circles and it was frustrating as hell.

“We have more than we did and that’s a good starting point. Now we just have to figure out who this person is and why they’re going after these wolves. If we can figure out the why then we can figure out the who.” Bash says before turning to look at me.

“As for you Mayra, I want eyes on you at all times. You’ll have two guards on you day and night, is that understood. We’re not going to risk losing you.” he orders, his voice brooking no room for argument.

I sigh and nod. This just made matters more complicated. Having guards on me would mean exposing my secret. Which meant the possibility of the council locking me up once they found out that Raya was unhinged.

I know his order is for my good but I don’t know which one is worse. Having guards and then having Raya exposed and ultimately end up

being locked or having no guards and ending up dead by the hands of whoever this beast is.

“Meeting adjourned.” I hear Sebastian say but he sounds so far away.

I was having an internal mini panic. Being stuck between a rock and hard place isn’t the best place to be, but what choice did I have? I had Iris to think about. Her happiness and safety were my priority right now.

“Mayra...you okay?” Darren’s voice penetrates the fog.

I look up to find that all the other Alphas have left. It was just Ren, Sebastian, Darren and me left in the room. They were all looking at me in concern.

I shake my head to clear the depressing thoughts.

“Yeah, I’m okay...just a little bit shocked, that’s all.” I assure them.

They don’t look convinced at all.

“I promise that we won’t let anything happen to you.” Sebastian speaks, making a promise that he shouldn’t be making.

I get that they want to protect me but with how the odds are stacked up against me, I don’t think they will be able to. The last thing I want is for them to be on the radar of that wolf simply because they were looking after me. I would never forgive myself if something happened to them because of me.

“Thank you, but that’s not...” I don’t get to finish because Darren interrupts me.

“I have an idea that I think might work. It will ensure that Mayra can always reach me if she’s ever in trouble.” he says seriously.

“What is it?” Ren asks curiously.

By the gleam in his eyes, I wasn’t sure whether I was going to love or hate the idea.

“I’ll mark her.”

We all stare at him. Sebastian contemplatively. Ren with a small smile and me with shock. Why in the world would he suggest that?

“Absolutely not.” I all but shout.

Jumping from the coach, I start pacing the room.

“Just listen, Mayra, marking you will give me access to you and vice versa. If you’re ever in danger, I will know and I will be able to find you using the mate bond. This is the best way of keeping you safe while ensuring you have your privacy.” he reasons.

“I like the idea. There was this one time I was attacked and drugged while out with the kids. Sebastian was able to find me and save me before the bastard had the chance to kill me.” Ren adds.

“I think this is for the best Mayra.” Sebastian nods.

I just stare at them not believing they would gang up on me. Getting marked is a huge thing and it's sacred. Right now, they are making it seem like a means to an end. Nothing more and nothing less.

“Are all you of out of your fucking minds?” I shriek.

They all look at each other then, at me. As if I was the crazy one.

“There is no way I'm going to allow Darren to mark me. It's out of the question so let me not hear you mention it ever again. End of discussion.” with that said, I storm out of the room. Banging the door behind me.

I was beyond livid when I get to my room. Unable to lay down, I start pacing the room again. I had this nervous and angry energy bouncing inside me.

Why would they think it is a great idea to get marked by a man that didn't love me? Sure, we had great chemistry in bed and had a connection and we had started dating but none of that meant that we would end up together. Or that he would fall in love with me. The last thing I wanted or needed was to be trapped in a mating after the threat has passed and he starts regretting marking me.

What was I going to do? I had so much on my plate right now that it was getting hard to even think straight. Why couldn't the goddess just make things easier for me? Why the hell was she so hard on me? What have I ever done to her?

I feel the tears threaten to fall but I force them back. Crying wasn't going to solve a damn thing. It would just leave me with puffy and red eyes.

‘Are you going to open the envelope or not?’ Raya pops out of nowhere.

Shit! I thought I had blocked her ass. I guess with the emotional overload, my defenses had weakened.

‘What envelope?’ I ask in confusion. Was she high or something?

She rolls her eyes at me. ‘Damn you’re stupid. How did you not notice that someone left an envelope on your desk? It is the first thing I saw the moment you entered the room.’

The moment she says that, my eyes shift to the said desk. Just like she had said, there was a white envelope there. I start approaching it with dread. Just like last time there wasn't a scent.

Please let it not be what I think it is. I plead

Reaching it, I take it then open it. Looks like my pleas fell on deaf ears again because I pull out pictures from it.

It was from the night I was attacked. Picture after picture of me running. The fear etched in my face and tears on my cheeks. There was a picture of me after the beast clawed me and when the patrol guards found me.

What froze my blood though, were the pictures of Iris. From when she arrived with Grace to the morning after when we had breakfast together.

Finally, the last picture was of Iris chasing after a butterfly outside. Attached to it was a note.

AIN'T SHE PRETTY.

I put the pictures and note down with trembling hands. My heart was beating wildly and my palms were sweating.

‘Well, that was fun to watch...you should have seen your scared face. It was priceless.’ she lets out a mocking laugh.

‘Fuck you Raya!’ I snap. Fear and anger mixing in my voice.

Goddess, I was so done with her horrible attitude. Without giving her another chance to taunt me again, I shove her to the back of my mind and build my walls so high it would put the walls of Jericho to shame.

Damn it! What the hell was I going to do? I had no idea who this stalker is or what they want and now they had involved Iris in whatever sick game he or she was playing. I made a vow to take care of her and already I was doing a shitty job at it.

A knock sounds at the door and I shove the picture and notes inside the drawer before answering the door. I already knew who it was.

“Look, I’m sorry for springing up the offer on you like that. I just wanted to help but I’ll also respect your decision if that’s what you want.” he says walking into my room.

I know I said I wouldn't accept his offer but things have changed. I needed to think of not only mine but Iris' safety. Like I said, she comes first and what better way to protect her other than allowing Darren to mark me. She would have a strong Alpha step dad backing her up

"It's okay Darren, I understand."

"No, it's not. I should have taken your feelings into consideration and asked first instead..."

I interrupt him before he can finish his sentence. "I accept."

"What?" he looks a bit shocked as he looks at me.

"I accept your offer. You can mark me."